

2.4 Paths to Salvation and the Caste System

Karma

- Karma is the totality of one's actions in life, and it determines the form the individual will take when he or she is reborn.
- Bad Karma will result in rebirth at a lower station in life or as a lower form of life, such as an animal.

Karma

- Good Karma will result in rebirth at a higher station in life, which is closer to attaining salvation.
- Therefore, in order to achieve salvation, Hindus must work their way up the ladder of existence, by trying to secure rebirth at a higher level. This is what led to the caste system.

Four Paths to Salvation

1. **Bhakti Yoga – The Path of Devotion**

- Devotion and love towards a particular personal deity. It's popular among Hindus because it provides the opportunity to worship Brahman in a concrete way.
- Followers focus their devotion through prayer and rituals.

Four Paths to Salvation

2. Karma Yoga – The Path of Action

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- The key to this path is good deeds and thoughts, which lead to the accumulation of good Karma.
- Good deeds are considered unselfish actions that are not done for a reward but because they are morally right.

Four Paths to Salvation

3. Jnana Yoga – The Path of Wisdom

- This difficult path calls for the guidance of a **guru** or teacher,
- Followers learn about the relationship between Brahman and atman and the nature of the universe as explained in the scriptures.

Four Paths to Salvation

3. Jnana Yoga (Path of Wisdom)

- By knowing the scriptures, following the guru's teachings and meditating, followers gain the insight necessary to achieve salvation

4. Raja Yoga – The Path of Meditation

- Followers of this path achieve salvation through meditation or deep contemplation on Brahman.
- Intense meditation leads to a trance like state in which the individual acquires knowledge of the truth and becomes one with Brahman.
- Requires strict physical and spiritual discipline.

Dharma

- This is how Hindus refer to their religion. It means a code of moral and religious duty.
- The concept of Dharma is related to the duties and obligations of the individual and is considered essential to the welfare of the individual, family and society.

Dharma

- There are two kinds of Dharma:
- **Sanatana dharma**, eternal religion, refers to universal values and principles that apply to all people, regardless of religion, nationality, age, sex or profession.
- **Varnashrama dharma**, which concerns the specific duties of each individual with respect to age, sex and status in society.

Caste System

- Divides humanity into four classes or **varnas**, which people are born into according to the Karma they have accumulated in previous lives
- There are 4 categories:
 - a) Brahmin
 - b) Kshatriya
 - c) Vaishya
 - d) Sudra



Brahmin



Brahmin Caste

Occupations



Pujari
Hindu Temple
Priest

Brahmin Caste

Occupations



**Guru:
Religious
Teacher**

Brahmin Caste

Goals



Brahmin Caste

Duties

- Performance of rituals and sacrifices
- Pursuits of arts, sciences, ethics, philosophy and religious study
- Research and teaching

Brahmin Caste

Required Characteristics

- Born into caste
- Highly developed intellect
- discipline

Kshatriya



Kshatriya

Occupations



**Leaders or
Warriors**

Kshatriya

Goals

- Political power
- Diplomacy

Kshatriya

Duties



Kshatriya

Required Characteristics



Physical
Strength
and
courage



Governing
Skills

Vaishya



Vaishya

Occupations



Vaishya

Goals

- Management of wealth
- Trade with other societies

Vaishya

Required Characteristics

- Management
- Entrepreneurial skills

Vaishya



Sudra

Occupations



Sudra

Goals

Manual Skills

Duties

Service to other castes

Sudra

Required Characteristics

Ability to acquire particular skills

The Untouchables



The Untouchables

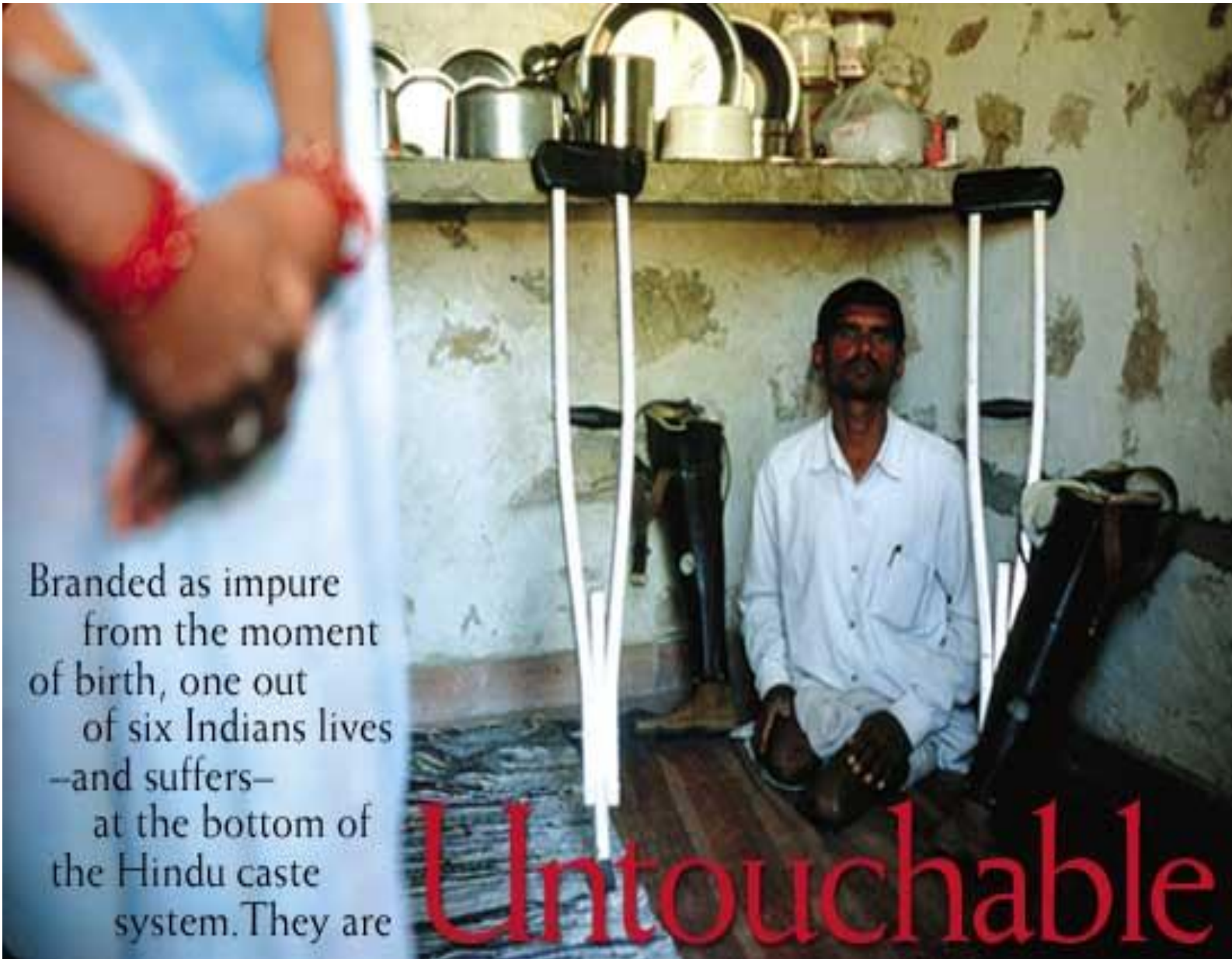
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The Untouchables

- A fifth group, outside of the four varnas, are called the untouchables.
- They engage in what is considered “unclean practices” such as tanning leather, removing dead animals or washing toilets. They were degraded by the nature of their work and lived separately from those in the other castes.

The Untouchables

- Gandhi fought to have these people included in the mainstream of Indian society.
- Today, India's charter of rights and freedoms bans discrimination based on caste.



Branded as impure
from the moment
of birth, one out
of six Indians lives
—and suffers—
at the bottom of
the Hindu caste
system. They are

Untouchable



- For some Indians, untouchables are less than human.
- Just over two years ago, five dalits were lynched near New Delhi after a rumour spread that they had killed and skinned a cow, revered as sacred in India.
- An autopsy was conducted on the cow - none were done for the the dalits - which confirmed the story their friends told - the cow had died of other causes and they were skinning it legally.

The Four Stages of Life

- **Student** – discipline mind and body, gain knowledge, learn rules and rituals, show respect towards elders.
- **Householder** – marry and have a family, provide for the family, give to charity, care for family elders, practice social and religious traditions.
- **Forest Dweller** – retire and transmit household duties to wife or son, read and study, participate in religious pilgrimages.
- **Ascetic** – give up worldly life, wander, meditate, attain salvation.

Four Goals of Life

- **Dharma** – conduct one's duties with compassion, no jealousy, cruelty or greed, be good and pure.
- **Artha** – earn an honest living, provide for family, acquire wealth and power.
- **Kama** – pursuing love and physical pleasures to balance life and to sanctify marriage.
- **Moksha** – leading the soul toward salvation through honest and moral actions.